

Comprehensive Plan Amendment Steering Committee
March 21, 2006 Meeting Notes

Steering Committee Members Present: Joe Plankis, Jen Smith, Gloria Del Greco, Jack Bonham, John Boyer, Karen Newberry

- **Joe Plankis** began the meeting by stating that this meeting would be a work session by the steering committee to work through the draft Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Comment cards were circulated to the public, and it was stated that comments and questions would be addressed later in the meeting.
- **Greg Dale** introduced the document by stating that this was the draft Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. This was one chapter of the greater Comprehensive Plan document. The land use element will be the heart of the plan and will provide a vision for the future land uses in Washington Township. There are two parts of the Land Use Element, the text and the conceptual land use map. The text contains the proposed land use categories that will be used, and the map will show what form these land uses will take across the township. Each land use category has background and development policies to further define them. The development policies for each land use category will act as a guide for development and a checklist for policy makers. We must remember that the Comprehensive Plan is a vision and not a regulation. The zoning and subdivision ordinances will provide the regulatory enforcement of the plan. In the cover memo, the consultants have listed a draft table of contents for the plan. There could be more or less chapters than currently described. Some possible chapter may be strategy documents for establishing a business park or for downtown.
- **Dave Mueller:** What will Chapter 4 look like when it is finalized?
- **Greg Dale:** I foresee the land use chapter being in bullet form and having illustrations and other graphics to help clarify certain points. Usually, the thicker a comprehensive plan is the more it sits on a shelf and is not used. I just want to review how we got here. Teree and I took the ideas from the subcommittee reports and the charette to clarify most of our main ideas for the document. About two weeks ago, we met with staff for a day and a half at the Hamilton County Alliance conference room, and picked their brains. This draft is a starting point for discussion. The plan is the steering committee's not the consultants.

- **Joe Plankis:** We need the steering committee to pick out words that need more definition. We have to determine how we will move from here. We need to look at the form and detail of the document. We probably won't get through the whole document tonight.
- **Dave Mueller:** At the first meeting the steering committee created a purpose statement; we should put this statement in the introduction. The purpose statement is as follows: The purpose of the steering committee is to create a document called the Comprehensive Plan Amendment that will serve as a blueprint for Westfield's future development.
- **Jack Bonham:** I think we should walk through the document page by page.
- **Greg Dale:** We will work for our two hour time period and set the schedule for any needed future meetings.
- **Joe Plankis:** Comment cards are available. We will take questions at the end of each section.

Section 1: Overall Goals and Policies:

- **Ron Thomas:** Is the input from the subcommittees in this document?
- **Greg Dale:** The subcommittee input was consolidated throughout the document.

Introduction:

- **Dave Mueller:** I want people who read this plan to know that this is the steering committee's document and not the consultants.
- **Jen Smith:** I am concerned about the phrase Not a regulation
- **Greg Dale:** We will tighten that and make it less wishy-washy.
- **Jen Smith:** Are there ways we can throw examples of existing development at the plan to test the plan?
- **Greg Dale:** Test cases can be useful to determine how certain types of development would be seen through the eyes of the plan.
- **Dave Mueller:** Take out the Not. Rephrase it to make it softer. I feel like a child being told No.

Goals and Policies:

- **Greg Dale:** We found some goals and policies that repeat, so we took them out and put them at the beginning as overall goals and policies.
- **Gloria Del Greco:** First paragraph: The concept of small town character is negated by the policies of the rest of the plan. It acts as an oxymoron.
- **Greg Dale:** Absorbing growth and preserving real rural uses is an oxymoron. We want to maintain the small town feel. We did that with the rural residential land uses, villages, and commercial uses on the corridors.
- **Jen Smith:** So you are describing rural character preservation, not rural preservation. There is a huge difference between those two concepts.
- **Greg Dale:** We heard the community say they wanted to balance rural character and the property rights of farmers. This is not a community that wants to preserve agriculture by making areas 1 house to every 25 or 50 acres. Land owners were thought to be able to sell their land, but we want to maintain aspects of our rural character by clustering development etc. You can't preserve farmland and develop at the same time. You can't have it both ways. As a planner, I would love to see true rural preservation, but that is not what I heard the community say.
- **John Boyer:** Rural feel are the key words. The rural areas would be low density and clustered.
- **Jen Smith:** I heard a smattering of all those ideas. Open areas in conservation subdivisions could still be areas that could be farmed. Some areas could have lot sizes greater than one acre.
- **Greg Dale:** Some of the subcommittees had divergent views on this issue. If you start with the assumption that you are developing with conservation subdivisions, then that is not true rural preservation. We need to figure out where these very low density areas will be on the map.
- **Gloria Del Greco:** Does rural feel mean current farmers can farm as long as they want to and not be forced to sell by developers and suburban neighbors, but I can still cash out when I want to?
- **Greg Dale:** That's the internal conflict. You can write in right to farm policies in the plan. If you allow that land to develop with conservation subdivisions It is not farming.

- **Jack Bonham:** I don't see the neighbors driving the farmers out. In terms of developers, that is up to the property owner. You can't force them to sell and you can't force them to continue farming. What do you do in the NW corner of the township? 1:1 or 1:3 or even clustered is not rural. Small town will be in the villages, downtown, or in TND's.
- **Gloria Del Greco:** Near Shamrock Springs there was a farmer who had so many complaints from his neighbors that he was forced to sell. As the ground develops around them, farmers will be forced to sell out.
- **Jack Bonham:** We cannot legally stop them from farming. The market will make farming unprofitable.
- **Greg Dale:** If farming becomes obsolete, how does that land develop? Is it rural in character or a holding area for future suburban?
- **Jack Bonham:** There should be a way to do both.
- **Greg Dale:** Conservation subdivisions; Are they rural – no, is it rural character – yes.
- **Jack Bonham:** Houses can be on one acre lots in a conservation subdivision.
- **Greg Dale:** Grow systematically – strike a balance between what the subcommittees said and what the property owners wants.
- **Gloria Del Greco:** Farmers should not be forced to sell or be surrounded. It is happening here. We need concrete areas where development shouldn't happen, we need to nail this down.
- **Greg Dale:** We have a large area mapped out for future suburban uses.
- **Jack Bonham:** Smaller lots in conservation subdivisions may be more expensive. How does this affect our policy for a wide range of housing types?
- **Greg Dale:** We should not justify certain home prices in the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Jack Bonham:** We want housing for all demographics.
- **Dave Mueller:** Page 3, first bullet: What is not said is just as meaningful as what is said. I would like the policy to state that no transitional uses should be developed before the commercial or business park areas.
- **Kevin Buchheit:** Is it different when the business park is approved and not built out and transitional uses want to come in to fill those open spaces?

- **Dave Mueller:** The business park should be in place before homes. The businesses should come first.
- **Kevin Buchheit:** In Noblesville's Corporate Park the housing is the first to come in to house the workforce, so they are ready to go. Most business park areas encourage a mixture of uses.
- **Al Salzman:** Should we provide guidance for the edges of the business park to protect the edges from incompatible development?
- **Gloria Del Greco:** Part of the businesses should be built before transitional uses occur.
- **Greg Dale:** We will try to address this in the next draft. We will better frame rural uses.
- **John Boyer:** What drove the mix of homes bullet on the bottom of page 2? I don't remember having a discussion about wanting more starter homes.
- **Jack Bonham:** Starter home is such a scary word. We need design criteria to ward off the starter home bias. We want to appeal to a large demographic of people. We need an inventory of our housing stock.
- **Greg Dale:** Connect the diversity of housing policy with a policy about quality design. What is the right mix of housing? We would need to do a fiscal analysis which is beyond the scope of the Comprehensive Plan. We can talk about quality and design in the plan. Price points are beyond the plan. They are so temporary. By all means, be aware and understand the fiscal impact of development.
- **Joe Plankis:** The quality of development is important. Mr. Dorfman said that housing needs to be between 200 and 400 thousand dollars to break even for the town and between 110 thousand and 700 thousand to break even for the schools.
- **John Boyer:** Starter homes are seen as negative.
- **Jen Smith:** The beginning of most of the policy sentences are negative. Don't start with starter homes.
- **Gloria Del Greco:** Don't spell it out... just say a range of homes is desirable.
- **Ron Thomas:** Fiscal is in the plan a lot. If you don't mean to discuss fiscal implications, take it out. Fiscal issues of development are important to the town.

- **Greg Dale:** We need to understand the fiscal impact of the mix of non residential and residential uses. Use a fiscal impact analysis as an implementation tool. Price points are not recommended in the plan. They are temporary and exclusionary.
- **Jack Bonham:** So fiscal impact analysis would be an implementation measure and not part of the plan?
- **Joe Plankis:** We need it in policy.
- **Kevin Buchheit:** Is there a way we can keep track of the fiscal impact of commercial development? The subdivision inventory will be finalized by the end of the month.

Public Questions:

- **Carl Winkler, Indianapolis Executive Airport:** The Business Park and other transitional uses would not be compatible with the executive airport. The village is also objected to because it will be within a mile of the airport.
- **Joe Plankis:** There will be no commercial or business park on Hamilton Boone road. It will be large lot residential. Jolietville and Eagletown are there currently, they are further east than on the map.
- **Greg Dale:** So should we have a policy saying Jolietville shouldn't grow out to the west?
- **Jen Smith:** Low density residential is acceptable, that's what the residents wanted.
- **Ginny Kelleher:** The charette addressed this issue. Jolietville will not be high density residential. Low density residential is ok. Commercial would also be appropriate, especially green businesses.
- **Greg Dale:** Right now Jolietville is no different than the other villages. We should add a policy that future growth in Jolietville should be concerned with the adjacent airport restrictions.
- **John Levitt:** With not being able to have things both ways: The Southwest is made up of 5-15 acre parcels. We want to preserve this area. That area should have a rural equestrian zoning.
- **Greg Dale:** Different rural areas are not the same. The southwest character is established and should remain that way.

- **Kevin Buchheit:** That point came out very strong in the southwest subcommittee.
- **Ron Thomas:** Page 2: We need to a definition of high quality, both present and future. In terms of business parks: We want our workforce to stay within our community. Too many already commute out of the community; we don't need more workers coming in when we have them already here.
- **Greg Dale:** Development policies will help define quality development.
- **Cindy Spoljaric:** This plan needs a timetable saying who will responsible and when things will be accomplished. I don't see any mention of environmental protection areas or special use districts.
- **Greg Dale:** Throughout all the land use categories there are policies relating to the environment, do these policies need tightening? Another chapter of the plan will discuss special use districts if needed.
- **Ginny Kelleher:** The definition of high quality is not concrete enough. We need definitions for many words in here. We should add the Jolietville policy discussed before into the plan.
- **Greg Dale:** We are considering a glossary of definitions. We can add a high quality design sidebar to the plan.
- **Ginny Kelleher:** Land use can also be considered a way to transition. Contiguity depends on the water and sewer plan. Define design standards not just for residential but commercial and industrial uses as well. How do we get open spaces in subdivisions that are usable? I consider north and south of SR 32 as different types of rural. We need a category between residential and agricultural, maybe equestrian. We can have both conservation subdivisions and also be truly rural.
- **Dawn Knight, school teacher:** We need to look at the fiscal impact of development. We need to look at the pace of development and how it affects the schools. My class sizes are getting larger.
- **Ron Thomas:** Schools were a positive to the community. We need to keep that and measure how development affects them.
- **Joe Plankis:** We should get Dr. Keen in to answer these questions.
- **Mark Grace:** How will the proposed East-West runway at the airport effect Jolietville?

- **Kevin Buchheit:** Currently, the airport master plan has a NE to SW runway. The airport is also currently updating their master plan. The aviation board meeting was earlier in the week.
- **Ken Kingshill:** About land use diversity, is it only forward looking or the entire picture now? I have been doing some research using the MLS data, and we have an abundance of starter homes, 53% of residential parcels in the township have an assessed value of less than 150 thousand.
- **Kevin Buchheit:** I didn't realize the MLS was a source for such data. Check your info with the assessor.
- **Bob Curry:** I think we should use price points to be in the plan.
- **Greg Dale:** I don't know how you implement or regulate it. You can't state price points, its not good planning. It is against the law to use price points. Check with your attorney. You can look at whether the current land use mix is balanced or not.
- **Joe Plankis:** Start with an inventory.
- **Mark Werner:** The goal is to be an attractive community to people who will bring income into the community. The land use mix will encourage commercial to be where commercial wants to be or go. We need opportunities for all sociological aspects of life.
- **Greg Dale:** A very important point. How do we articulate that in details?

Goals and Policies Continued:

- **Dave Mueller:** For the glossary – define pedestrian facilities
- **Greg Dale:** Highlight glossary terms for us for next time.
- **Jen Smith:** The policy dealing with the expansion of key infrastructure is weird.
- **Kevin Buchheit:** Meaning water, sewer, roads.
- **Gloria Del Greco:** Development should be planned for even if it is not contiguous if infrastructure is there. Ex. Village of West Clay
- **Kevin Buchheit:** The project at 159th and Towne expanded key infrastructure- the J. Edwards interceptor.

- **Greg Dale:** Don't preclude development if infrastructure is there and the product is good.
- **Jen Smith:** Define access management plan.
- **Greg Dale:** That will be defined in the implementation section.
- **Jack Bonham:** Second bullet under residential design standards: How do we define town character?
- **Kevin Buchheit:** Is that bullet better as two separate policies?
- **Gloria Del Greco:** There is a large variety of choices.
- **Jen Smith:** Not cookie cutter, we heard that term a lot.
- **Dave Mueller:** The cost of dirt will determine the quality and type of house that gets built here. If the community is seen as good, people will come. We need a clear vision. Supply and demand of land will determine the quality.
- **Jack Bonham:** Some place later: Can we list elements of good design?
- **Greg Dale:** You can do design guidelines or a design manual. This is beyond the plan. How far do you go?
- **Jen Smith:** The plan guides the decision making process, it is important it is in there.
- **Karen Newberry:** We need to state minimums or it becomes too vague.
- **Greg Dale:** Photos and illustrations can help show the types of design you want.
- **Jen Smith:** What are the recommend percentages of open space for different developments? Do we need a yield plan?
- **Greg Dale:** Ranges are ok for each land use category.
- **Joe Plankis:** Dorfman recommended using density bonuses to encourage more open space.
- **Kevin Buchheit:** Greg can you help us see what different percentages of open space look like?

- **Greg Dale:** I will look up other communities. Some communities base their open space on a sliding scale according to the size of the development.
- **Jen Smith:** Can we get the percentage of open space in our current developments?
- **Kevin Buchheit:** How open space is assembled is important.
- **Mic Meade:** Need to use density and not minimum lot sizes.
- **Ron Thomas:** It is important to know where open space is and how it is assembled. You want it on the perimeter.
- **Andy Cook:** Open space doesn't pay taxes.
- **Greg Dale:** Use a fiscal impact model of development, no price points.
- **Jack Bonham:** Open space doesn't consume services, less burdensome than houses.
- **Joe Plankis:** Dorfman said that property values around open space goes up.
- **Ron Thomas:** Why give density bonuses? The developer will do it that way anyway because their service costs are cheaper.
- **Jack Bonham:** To provide incentives to go cluster instead of developing traditional subdivisions.
- **Greg Dale:** That is a good policy question. It does help to incentivize the development you want.
- **Ron Thomas:** Require conservation subdivisions, don't give density to them for free.
- **Jack Bonham:** Conservation subdivisions need incentives because residential doesn't pay for itself.

The next meeting to continue reviewing the draft will be on April 13